



Cape Town

A Historical Exposé

Cape Town *(for a gallery of old photos, scroll to the last pages)*

In many ways, the history of Cape Town is tied into the history of South Africa as Cape Town was the first inhabited area in written history (modern times).

The Early Years

Human communities had lived in the Cape Peninsula and the Western Cape long since early times, surviving by hunting, fishing and gathering edible plants and roots. They were the ancestors of the Khoisan peoples of modern times (the Bushmen (San) and the Hottentot (Khoikhoi)). Oral history passed from generation to generation of Khoisan people show the original name to be "Hui !Gaeb," a Khoisan word meaning "where clouds gather."

The Bushmen were hunter-gatherers who lived in small, loosely knit groups of about 20 persons. They were highly mobile on account of their dependence on game, and for the same reason widely dispersed territorially. The Hottentot, in comparison, were mainly herders along the Orange River, the boundary river between South Africa and Namibia, and the coastal belt stretching from Namibia around Cape Point to the Eastern Cape. Both groups were thought to have migrated southward, ahead of the Bantu-speaking peoples whose ancestral home lay well in the north.



Before the Dutch came to the Cape, the Hottentot conducted trade with their Bantu-speaking neighbours in cattle and, to a lesser extent, iron and copper. After the arrival of Europeans, they traded their cattle for tobacco and began to act as brokers in developing trade between the Europeans and the Xhosa tribes to the east.

The Portuguese

In 1487, the Portuguese sailor Bartholomeus Dias set out to find a sea route to the East. Sailing along the west coast of Africa, his ships encountered a ferocious storm, which drove them out to sea and away from the coast. Once the storm had passed they resumed their journey in an easterly direction, expecting to reach the coast, their guideline, again soon. After a number of days' sailing without any sign of land, they changed direction and headed north, eventually landing at the mouth of the Gouritz River on the east coast of Africa on 3 February 1488. Dias and his crew were the first Europeans on record to round the Cape, albeit unwittingly.

It is widely believed that it was Dias who named the peninsula Cabo Tormentosa (Cape of Storms). This name was later changed to Cabo da Boa Esperanca (Cape of Good Hope) to signify that the rounding of the Cape brought hope that a sea route to the East was possible. In 1497, Vasco Da Gama completed the sea route from Portugal around the Cape to India, thus finally opening up the trade route between Europe and the East.

Antonio de Saldanha was the first European to land in Table Bay. He climbed the mighty mountain in 1503 and named it 'Table Mountain'. The great cross that the Portuguese navigator carved in the rock of Lion's Head is still traceable.

In 1580, Sir Francis Drake sailed around the Cape in The Golden Hind and the ruggedness and breath-taking beauty of the peninsula inspired him to wrote –

"This Cape is a most stately thing, and the fairest Cape in the whole circumference of the earth".

One hundred and sixty years after it was first discovered, the Peninsula was still a part of primeval Africa, almost unaffected by the tide of commerce that ebbed and flowed around its southern shores. Outward bound from Europe, the early navigators were too eager to reach the East. Homeward bound, they were too impatient to reap the profits in the European ports. Passing ships would leave postal matter under inscribed stones for other ships to find and carry forward. These so-called post office stones are still found in excavations and there is an interesting collection of them in the South African Museum in the Company's Gardens in Cape Town.

The Dutch

The area fell out of regular contact with Europeans until 1652, when Jan van Riebeeck and other employees of the Dutch East India Company (Dutch: Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie, or simply VOC) were sent to the Cape to establish a halfway station to provide fresh water, vegetables, and meat for passing ships travelling to and from Asia. Van Riebeeck's party of three vessels landed at the cape on 6 April 1652. The group quickly erected shelters and laid out vegetable gardens and orchards, and are preserved in the Company Gardens. Water from the Fresh River, which descended from Table Mountain, was channelled into canals to provide irrigation. The settlers bartered with the native Khoisan for their sheep and cattle. Forests in Hout Bay and the southern and eastern flanks of Table Mountain provided timber for ships and houses. At this point, the VOC had a monopoly on trade and prohibited any private trade. The Dutch gave their own names to the native inhabitants that they encountered, calling the pastoralists "Hottentots", those that lived on the coast and subsisted on shellfishing "Strandlopers", and those who were hunter-gatherers were named "Bushmen".

The first wave of Asian immigration to South Africa started in 1654. These first immigrants were banished to the Cape by the Dutch Batavian High Court. These Asians helped to form the foundation of the Cape Coloured and Cape Malay populations, as well as bringing Islam to the Cape. The first large territorial expansion occurred in 1657, when farms were granted by the VOC to a few servants in an attempt to increase food production. These farms were situated along the Liesbeeck River and the VOC still retained financial control of them. The first slaves were brought to the Cape from Java and Madagascar in the following year to work on the



farms.[7] The first of a long series of border conflicts between the inhabitants in the European-controlled area and native inhabitants began in 1658 when settlers clashed with the Khoi, who realised that they were losing territory.

Work on the Castle of Good Hope, the first permanent European fortification in the area, began in 1666. The new castle replaced the previous wooden fort that Van Riebeeck and his men built. Finally completed in 1679, the castle is the oldest building in South Africa.

Simon van der Stel, after whom the town of Stellenbosch is named, arrived in 1679 to replace Van Riebeeck as governor. He enlarged and beautified van Riebeeck's garden and built a slave lodge (today the Cultural History Museum) at the entrance. It was during Simon van der Stel's governorship that the Huguenots, who had been driven from France by the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, arrived from Holland. There were some 200 of them, so small a number that they were quickly absorbed in the Dutch population. The lands given to Simon van der Stel by the Dutch East India Company, stretched from Muizenberg to the Steenberg Mountains, right across to Wynberg. He turned this vast region into rich farmland, planted some eight thousand trees and designed and built the stateliest of the Cape's historic mansions, Groot Constantia (named after his wife, Constance) in 1685, where he lived until his death in 1712. Groot Constantia remains one of the most favoured destinations for visiting tourists to the Cape. The Estate gave its name to the Constantia area, and its wines won the praise of even such connoisseurs as Kings of France. Simon van der Stel is also the founder of Stellenbosch, Drakenstein and Franschhoek, and is responsible for the construction of many of the famous homesteads in the Cape. More farmers soon settled in the Constantia area, along the little streams pretentiously named the Spaanschemat and Diep Rivers and on the soils so well suited to the vine. West of the mountains, Kronendal in the Hout Bay valley was granted to another enterprising settler in 1681 and a wagon road into the valley was opened over Constantia Nek twelve years later.

Simon van der Stel's eldest son, Willem Adriaan van der Stel, who succeeded him as Governor, added a museum to the gardens, and erected a lodge (now Government House) for the reception of visitors. He built Nieuweland (on a site now occupied by Newlands House) where he started a new garden. Later it replaced Rustenburg as the country residence of successive Governors and its pleasure gardens became almost legendary in the writings of eighteenth century visitors to the Cape. Willem Adriaan van der Stel also developed the Vergelegen Estate, where he built a house and planted over 500 000 vines, large orchards and corn lands. He stocked the farm with 800 cattle and 10 000 sheep. The fact that the Governor traded his products with ships in the port brought him into conflict with other farmers and eventually led to his recall to Holland and confiscation of his estate. The Dutch East India Company, which had reached the high point of its power during the governorships of the van der Stels, began to decline, chiefly because of English and French competition in the eastern markets.

In 1737 eight ships were wrecked in a single storm in Table Bay, with a loss of over 200 lives. In 1773, the Dutch East Indiaman The Jonge Thomas drifted into the breakers during a violent gale. Although 200 men were aboard, no effort was made by the Company's officials to rescue them. Enraged by this callousness, an old man, Wolraad Woltemade, borrowed a horse and rode into the pounding surf towards the doomed vessel. Eight times he made the journey and saved 14 men. He drowned during his last attempt. Ultimately the Company was driven to establish another winter port at Simon's Bay (modern Simon's Town). Named after Simon van der Stel, who surveyed the bay in 1657, ships were safe here under the lee of the Peninsula highlands.

The French

The first non-Dutch immigrants to the Cape, the Huguenots, arrived in 1688. The Huguenots had fled from anti-Protestant persecution in Catholic France to the Netherlands, where the VOC offered them free passage to the Cape as well as farmland. The Huguenots brought important experience in wine production to the Cape, greatly bolstering the industry, as well as providing strong cultural roots.

The British

By 1754, the population of the settlement on the Cape had reached 5,510 Europeans and 6,729 slaves.

During the war between Britain and Holland (1780-1783) a British fleet sailed to take possession of the Cape, but was attacked and disabled by the French. The French then landed two regiments at the Cape to assist the Dutch in the defence of the Colony. Part of the large hospital on the outskirts of town was assigned to them as barracks. After 1795 the building was wholly occupied by troops and in time the adjoining Ziekenstraat became more appropriately known as Barrack Street, a name it still bears.



When the revolutionary armies of France invaded Holland, William of Orange escaped to England and issued instructions that the Cape should temporarily be handed over to the British for protection against the French. Accordingly, in 1795, a British force arrived at the Cape. The Dutch resisted and, after a brief battle (the Battle of Muizenberg), retired before superior forces.

The change of authority brought with it other changes that many felt were long overdue. Many of the monopolies and other restrictions on trade, by which the Company had promoted its own pecuniary interests at the expense of the colonists, were swept away. A large garrison again provided a ready market for farm produce and thirsty patrons for the houses that had already given Cape Town its reputation as The Tavern of the Seas.



The British remained in possession until 1803, when the Colony was relinquished to the Dutch by the terms of the Treaty of Amiens. Within three months of the restoration of the colony, war had again broken out between Britain and Holland. In 1806, a British fleet of sixty-one ships dropped anchor at Robben Island and landed 6 000 troops at Blaauwberg.

The Battle of Blaauwberg followed and Dutch resistance crumbled. In 1814 the Cape Colony was formally ceded to Britain by a convention under which Dutch vessels were to remain entitled to resort freely to the Cape of Good Hope for the purposes of refreshment and repairs.

In 1814, Lord Charles Somerset became Governor, and the following year he inaugurated the first mail-packet service between England and Cape Town. This was the beginning of the Union-Castle Company's connection with South Africa. The Union and Castle lines amalgamated in 1900.

Outside the town, satellite villages formed around churches and inns along the road to False Bay. At the eastern foot of Wynberg Hill was the village of Wynberg. With its white-walled thatched cottages set among gardens and fruit trees, it possessed at one time much of the atmosphere of an English country village and became for a while the favourite resort of officials of the British East India Company recuperating at the Cape.



At Simon's Bay, an extensive fishing village began to expand. A whaling station had been established, a Residency had been built, and the growing settlement had assumed the name of Simon's Town. The naval establishment had been transferred there from Table Bay in 1814 and it had acquired an atmosphere more reminiscent of Portsmouth or Plymouth than characteristic of the Cape.

In 1824, Cape Town's first newspaper, The Commercial Advertiser was published. It was printed in English and Dutch. In 1830, Sir Lowry Cole laid the foundation stone of St. George's Church, now called St. George's Cathedral, the first English Church in South Africa.

The first civil hospital in southern Africa was built on the western edge of the town, largely through the public-spirited action of Dr. Samuel S. Bailey, a naval surgeon who had served with Admiral Lord Nelson at Trafalgar. Subsequently enlarged, it became the old Somerset Hospital to a later generation.

Schools also appeared and in 1829 the South African College was opened in Long Street. In 1841 a site at the upper end of the gardens was ceded to the College.



One of the first duties of Sir Benjamin D'Urban, appointed Governor in 1834, was to give effect to the Act for the emancipation of slaves passed by the British Parliament in 1833. Some 39,000 slaves, mostly in the western districts of the Colony, were granted their freedom. The British Government provided inadequate compensation for slave-owners and many were reduced from affluence to bankruptcy.

News was brought to Governor D'Urban at a convivial New Year's Eve gathering of the irruption of the Bantu tribes over the eastern border of the Colony. He instructed Colonel Harry Smith (later Governor Sir Harry Smith) to make for Grahamstown to organise the border forces. Colonel Smith left, on horseback, at daybreak and arrived at Grahamstown six days later, having ridden one hundred miles each day, at fourteen miles an hour throughout, a wonderful equestrian feat.

The British Government made an attempt in 1849 to form a penal settlement at the Cape, but when the ship Neptune arrived at Simon's Bay, with 282 convicts aboard, the citizens

declined to supply anything to persons having dealings with her. So strictly was this pledge observed that no food whatever was obtainable, either for the convicts or for the troops.

During the riots which ensued, Newspaper Editor John Fairbairn's house at Sea Point was wrecked by a crowd who had lost their employment through the boycott. In the end the colonists were victorious, and on 21 February 1850, the Neptune set sail for Tasmania. In recognition of the services of C. B. Adderley who had championed the colonists in this manner in the British House of Commons, the name of Cape Town's main street was changed to Adderley Street.

Cape Town became a municipality in 1840. A liberal constitution was granted to the Cape Colony in 1853 and the first elected Parliament met on 30 June 1854. On 28 November 1872 a complete self-government for the Cape Colony was promulgated by a proclamation of Sir Henry Barkley, who laid the first foundation stone of the present Houses of Parliament in 1875.

In the second half of the century the building of railways, the opening of diamond and gold mines in the interior, and all their manifold and far-reaching economic consequences added enormously to the commercial importance of Cape Town. The sleepy settlement awoke and began to grow as never before. A railway was completed to Stellenbosch and Wellington in 1863. The discovery of diamonds in Griqualand West a few years later demanded its extension to the distant diamond fields. In 1885 it had barely reached Kimberley when the Witwatersrand goldfields presented a still more distant goal. Within the next decade the opening of gold mines in Southern Rhodesia lured the railhead still farther northward. Cape Town was transformed within a generation from a roadstead on Table Bay, to one of the major ports serving a rapidly developing sub-continent.



During the mid 19th century, harbour improvements were urgently needed. The port in Table Bay possessed only four jetties, and recurrent wrecks in the bay were grim reminders of its exposure to north-westerly gales. The storms of 1857 and 1865 accounted for 24 shipwrecks off the Cape coast. The work was started in 1860 and was completed in 1870 when the Alfred Dock was inaugurated by Prince Alfred. Completion of the Robinson Graving Dock twelve years later equipped the port to repair the largest vessels of the time, and the extension of the harbour works to form the outer Victoria Basin by the end of the century endowed Table Bay with a commodious modern harbour. The waterfront became increasingly cluttered with a miscellaneous collection of skin-drying, wool-processing, fish-smoking, soap making and boat-building establishments.

At Simon's Town, new fortifications and the Selborne Dock were constructed and the little town was transformed into a modern naval base. The demand for fresh farm produce made potential farm land too valuable to be left idle. Farms were developed over the Cape Flats where dairy and poultry farming was most common, as well as vegetable and flower farming.

The Afrikaners

South Africans fought alongside the Allies in both world wars, but Afrikaner opposition to British support continued throughout. The opponents of involvement were very much in the minority and whites from both language groups volunteered in large numbers, as did those of mixed descent. South Africans fought in German South West Africa (now Namibia) during the First World War. Other areas of operation were East Africa and western Europe where, at Delville Wood, 3152 South Africans held their positions against massive bombardment and counter attack. 755 survived unwounded. During the Second World War,

South Africans again fought against the Nazis in East Africa, in the Western Desert and in Europe, forging a path up the spine of Italy in one of the toughest campaigns of the war.

Before 1914 South Africa depended mainly upon overseas countries for most of the manufactured articles in daily use. As such imports were not so readily available in wartime, the First and Second World Wars provided powerful incentives to develop South African industries. Moreover, after 1918 and especially after 1945, many overseas manufacturers found it economically advantageous to establish branch factories in the Union. Expanding overseas trade necessitated the building of a new 200-acre basin in the harbour. But its inadequacy to meet the needs of the port was soon recognised and plans to modify and incorporate it in the basin now known as the Duncan Dock were being formulated even before the new basin was completed. The construction of the Duncan Dock, begun in 1938, proceeded and was practically completed by 1945 when the 1 200 foot long Sturrock Graving Dock was opened.

The years between the forming of the Union in 1910 and the historical parliamentary election of 1948 witnessed the growth of South Africa into a powerful industrial nation. The National Party won its first election under the leadership of D. F. Malan in 1948. Its rise to power marked the beginnings of the apartheid era.

After a series of bitter court and constitutional battles, the already limited voting rights of the Coloured community in Cape Province were revoked. In 1966, the once-vibrant District Six area was bulldozed and declared a white-only area. This and many similar declarations under the Group Areas Act resulted in whole communities being uprooted and relocated to the Cape Flats.

Under apartheid, the Cape was considered a "Coloured labour preference area", to the exclusion of Black Africans. The government tried for decades to remove largely Xhosa squatter camps, such as Crossroads, which were the focal point for black resistance in the Cape area to the policies of apartheid. In the last forced removal, between May and June 1986, an estimated 70,000 people were expelled from their homes.

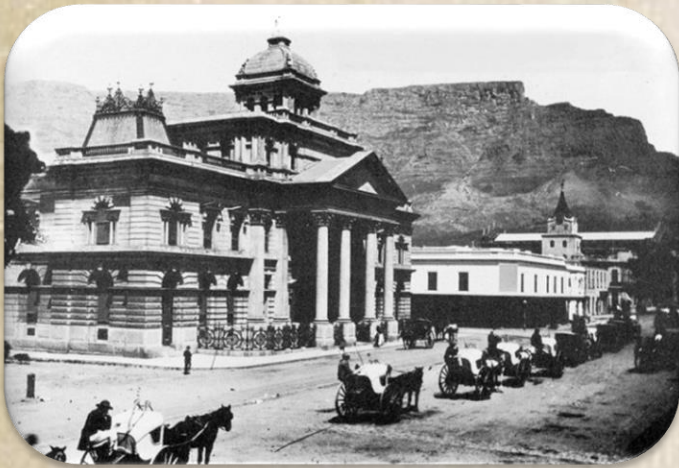


The New South Africa

Hours after being released from prison on 11 February 1990, Nelson Mandela made his first public speech in decades from the balcony of the Cape Town City Hall, heralding the beginning of a new era for South Africa.

There has now been 27 year's of democracy in South Africa and Cape Town has grown so much since the beginning of this story. Here is some photos to show how Cape Town changed during the years.

See the pages below for images from the past:



Adderley Street 1890



Adderley Street 1900



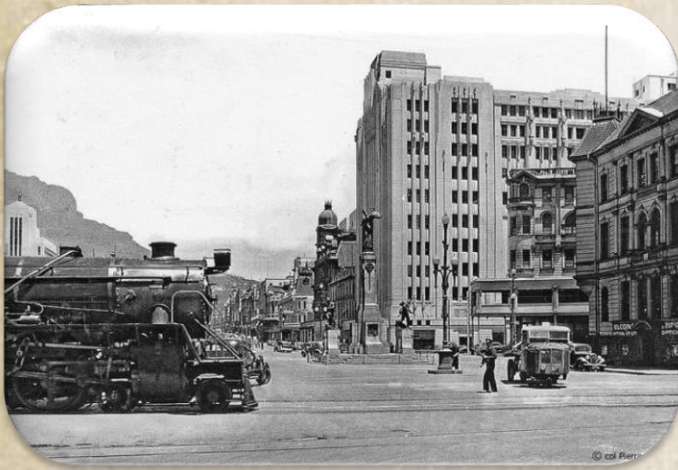
Adderley Street 1910



Adderley Street 1925



Adderley Street 1930



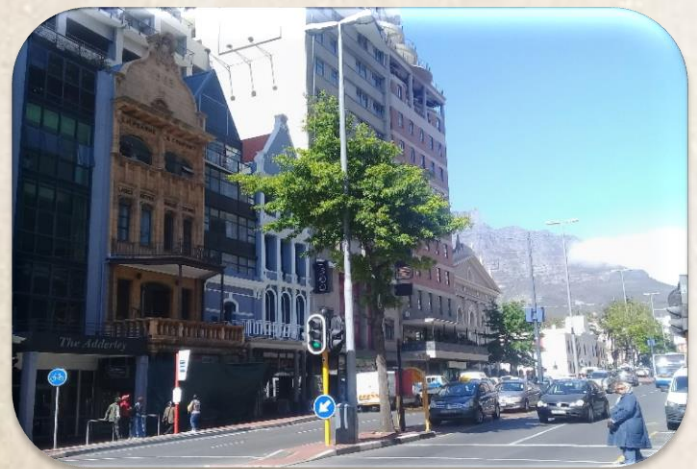
Adderley Street 1935



Adderley Street 1944



Adderley Street 2015



Adderley Street 2017



Adderley Street 2017



Adderley Street 2017

